

# 34 Connections

Henderson and Warren Counties, Illinois

## Results from Public Opinion Survey

A questionnaire was distributed throughout the project area last August, asking the public about usage of the roadway system and issues they felt were important for the planning process of U.S. Route 34. Almost 160 surveys were returned. Answers included:

### Significant Issues to Be Considered During the Study

- Traffic 25%
  - Farmland Impacts 18%
  - Business and Industrial Development 12%
  - Residential Effects 12%
- ### Problems Experienced on U.S. Route 34
- Safety 72%
  - Truck Traffic 69%
  - Congestion 54%
  - Road Condition 41%

## ENVIRONMENTAL AND LAND USE ISSUES PLAY IMPORTANT ROLE

Many factors are considered when planning an improvement or designing a new roadway. There are federal regulations and laws that require the Study Team to examine the potential

effect of the new roadway on natural and human resources. These resources include historical structures, farmland, wetlands, water quality, threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, among others.

The Study Team knows that many area farmers are concerned about how the roadway will affect access, and their day-to-day operations. The Study Team is looking very carefully at how we can minimize these impacts and still meet the transportation needs of the area.

An architectural survey was conducted last September for buildings along existing U.S. Route 34. This survey will help identify what buildings may have historical significance.

The archaeological survey of the study corridor began last spring. The survey will locate important archaeological sites which, if possible, should be avoided during the alignment studies.

Throughout the summer and fall, staff from the American Archaeology,

Illinois Natural History Survey and the consultant will be conducting pre-historic, historic and biological surveys. If you have property within the study corridor, they may need access to your property. They will be carrying a letter from IDOT explaining why they need access to your property. These surveys are a very important aspect of the study process and your cooperation would be greatly appreciated.

An Environmental Document will be produced that describes what the potential impacts of the new roadway are to the human and natural environment. The public will have an opportunity to review and comment on the Draft Report before any final decisions are made.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Formulation and Evaluation of Preliminary Alternatives
- Biological, Cultural and Archaeological Surveys

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) is committed to keeping you informed of activities related to the proposed improvements to U.S. Route 34 from Gulfport to Monmouth. This newsletter gives you an update on project activities since the last public meeting and what to expect in the coming months. Your input into the planning process for U.S. Route 34 is very important, and IDOT encourages your comments and opinions.

## Inside This Issue:

- Goals of the U.S. Route 34 Project Study
- Project Activities
- Public Meeting Summary
- Environmental and Land Use Issues
- Upcoming Events

**For More Information Contact:**  
Dale Risinger, District Engineer  
401 Main Street  
Peoria, Illinois 61602-1111  
Attention: Annette Mills  
309/671-3491



## GOALS OF THE U.S. ROUTE 34 PROJECT

The goal of the U.S. Route 34 Project Study is to complete engineering and environmental studies for a 4-lane highway from the Gulfport area to the Monmouth area with appropriate connections at each end to the existing and proposed 4-lane highways. The purpose of the project is to provide more efficient and safer travel for both local and through traffic on U.S. Route 34. The overall length of the project from Carman Road to IL Route 164 east of Monmouth is 28.7 miles.

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

### Project Corridor Modified

A corridor is a band approximately 1-3 miles wide in which the improvements to U.S. Route 34 will be located (see map inside). The Study Team has evaluated past studies, and considered comments received at the public meetings in September and has modified the corridor slightly to give the Study Team more options in locating the roadway. For instance, a triangular area on the east side of the project area, just south of Monmouth, has been added. This addition gives the Study Team the option of looking at different connections to U.S. Route 67 south of Monmouth.

Some previous corridor areas within portions of Biggsville and Kirkwood have been eliminated.

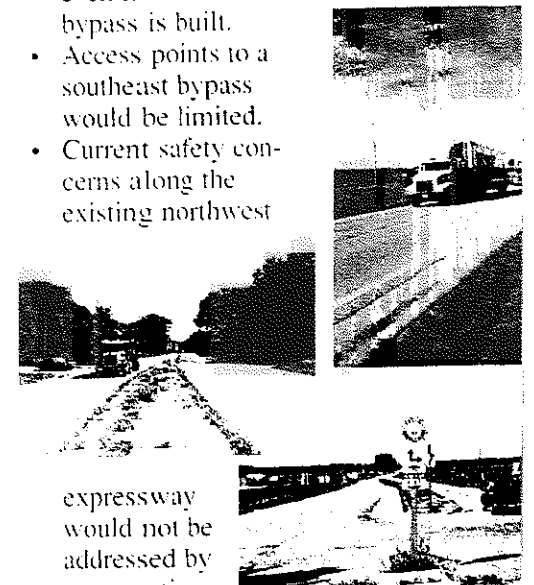
## Two Recommendations Presented at April Public Meetings

Over 120 people attended public meetings held on April 23 and 29 in Biggsville and Monmouth. Two recommendations for improvements to U.S. Route 34 were presented at these meetings. They include the following:

## Existing Northwest Monmouth Bypass to be Upgraded

Based on traffic and alignment studies, the Study Team has determined that upgrading the existing northwest expressway would be more beneficial than constructing a new southeast bypass. Factors leading to this decision included:

- 70% of existing traffic will continue to use the northwest expressway even if a southeast bypass is built.
- Access points to a southeast bypass would be limited.
- Current safety concerns along the existing northwest



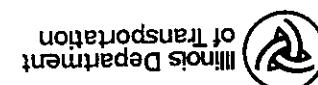
expressway would not be addressed by constructing a southeast bypass.

- Upgrading the current northwest expressway could be completed in phases, whereas the southeast bypass would have to be built all at once to serve its intended purpose.
- Construction costs and regular maintenance costs would be reduced with an upgraded existing U.S. Route 34.

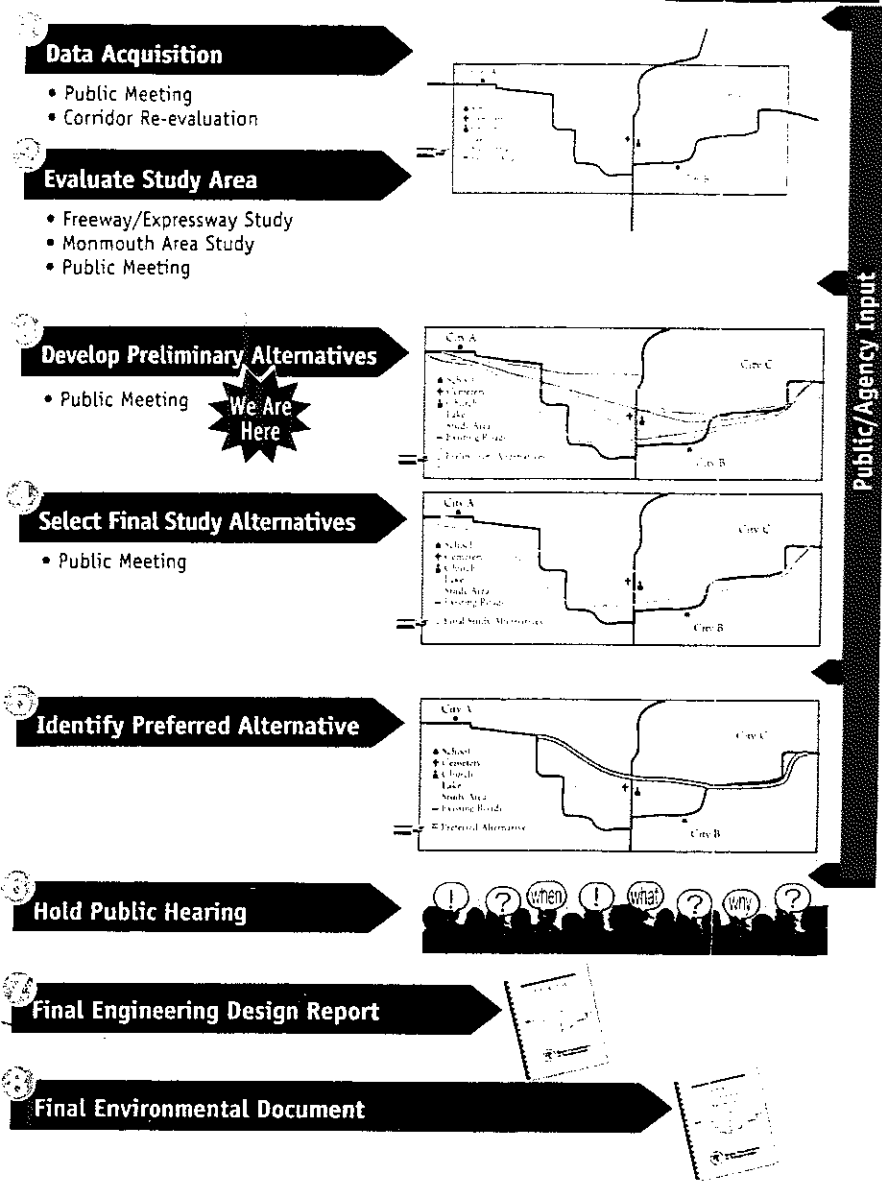
Alternatives for improving the existing northwest expressway will consider upgrading existing intersections, possible grade separations at cross streets, or a freeway-type facility with interchanges at key crossings.

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401 Main Street, Suite 900  
Peoria, IL 61602-1111



# U.S. Route 34 Planning Process



current and future traffic characteristics. Analyses included an origin and destination survey of motorists in the Monmouth area, and review of existing and historical traffic volumes along the entire U.S. Route 34 corridor. Through "on the road" and post card surveys, the study team was able to understand the origin and destination of motorists traveling through the Monmouth area as well as help project future traffic volumes. Findings include:

- Verified the significant percentages of truck traffic traveling through the area;
- Nearly half of all vehicles traveling through the area stop in Monmouth; and
- More than two-thirds of Monmouth area motorists would continue to use existing U.S. Route 34, north and west around town.

These traffic studies helped support the decision to exclude a southeast bypass around Monmouth.

The Study Team would like to thank everyone who participated in the origin and destination traffic surveys in the Monmouth area.

## Study Team Developing Preliminary Alternative Locations for Improvements

The Study Team is in the process of developing and reviewing preliminary alternative locations for the new roadway. These alternatives are being developed with consideration of potential impacts to the natural and human environment, engineering feasibility and with input received from the public and federal and state agencies. The above illustration shows the process of locating a new roadway. Step number 3 is where the project is currently. The Study Team will narrow these preliminary alternatives to examine in-depth how well they meet the objectives of the roadway system and how well they minimize impacts. These study alternatives will be presented at the next public meeting.

## U.S. Route 34 Focus Group Working Closely with the Study Team

An important aspect of planning roadway improvements is to engage the local communities in order to understand their

concerns and gather feedback. The Study Team has established a U.S. Route 34 Focus Group, consisting of representatives from each of the communities that may be affected by the improvements. The primary objective of the Focus Group is to serve as a liaison group between the public and the Study Team. The Study Team benefits from the feedback gathered and concerns identified by the Focus Group. Members of the Focus Group can give the general public up-to-date information regarding the status of the project and project findings. Members of the group include:

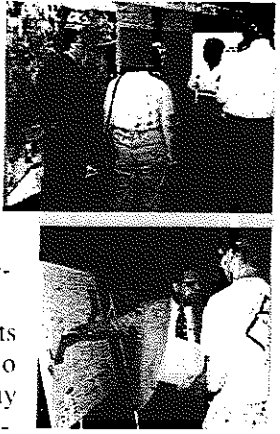
- U.S. Route 34 Focus Group**
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Mr. Frank Jones<br>Village of Biggsville Representative        | Mr. Larry Gray<br>Union Community School District        |
| Mr. Donald Olson<br>Village of Gladstone                       | Mr. Roger Davis<br>Monmouth Chamber of Commerce          |
| Mr. Ed Ronner<br>Village of Gulfport                           | Mr. Kevin Rund<br>Illinois Farm Bureau                   |
| Mr. James Lauver<br>Village of Kirkwood                        | Ms. Lorrie Mattes<br>Henderson/Warren County Farm Bureau |
| Ms. Carol Cook<br>City of Monmouth Representative              | Mr. Frank Vidoni<br>Warren County Engineer               |
| Mr. Bill Reichow<br>Warren County Board                        | Mr. Dan Ratermann<br>Henderson County Engineer           |
| Mr. Charles McChesney<br>Henderson County Board Representative | Mr. Shawn Gillen<br>Monmouth Mayor                       |
| Ms. Linda Utsinger<br>Galesburg Chamber of Commerce            |  |

## NEARLY 200 ATTEND FIRST PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS

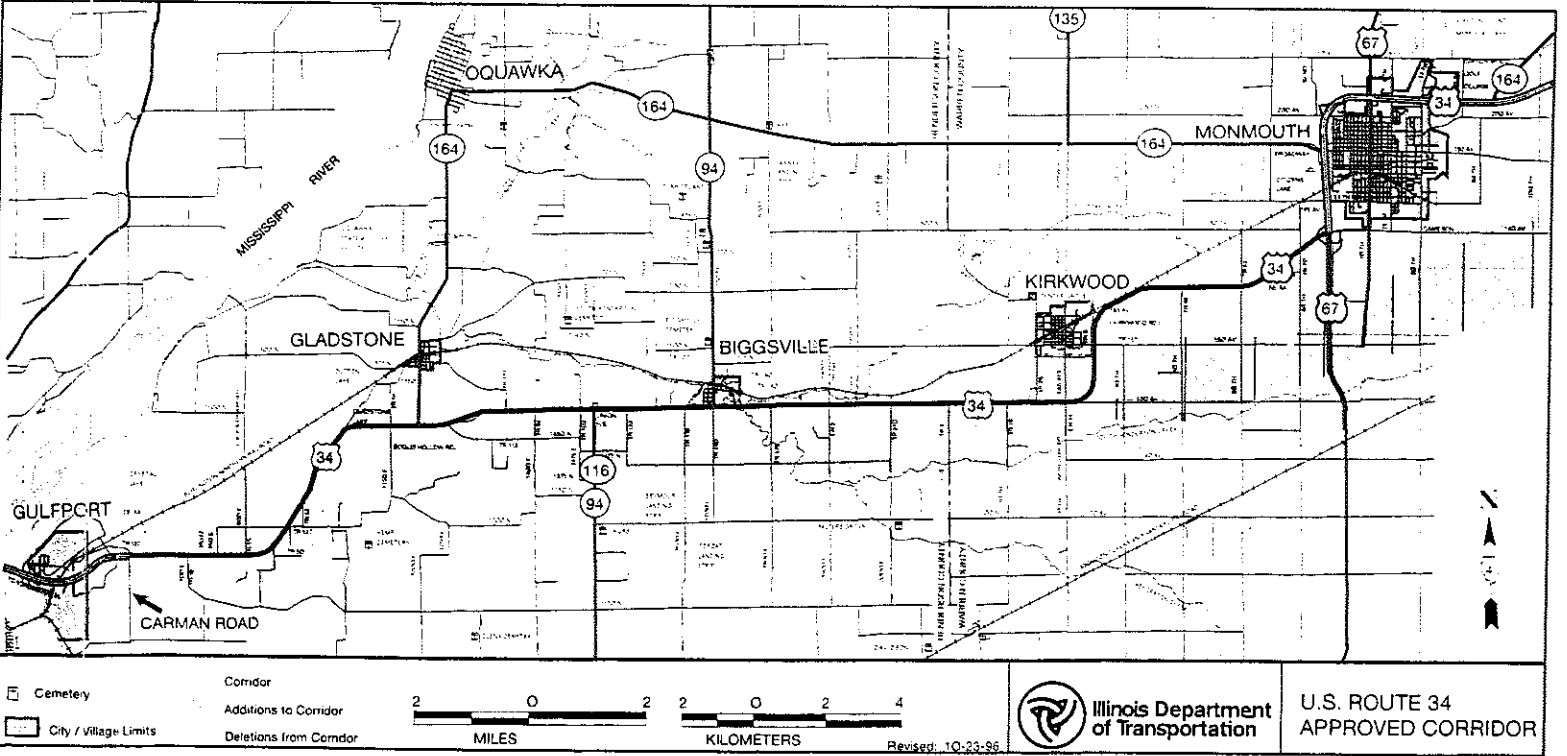
Two open-house meetings were held September 10 and 11 last year to introduce the goals and objectives of the project and solicit comments from local residents and business owners prior to developing any alternative locations for the planned improvements. Nearly 200 people attended the meetings in Monmouth and Biggsville. Members of the public shared their local knowledge of the

area including current and future land use, travel patterns, locations of cemeteries, historical structures and farming practices. This information, along with written comments received, is currently being used to help identify potential locations for the improved U.S. Route 34. Community concerns that were expressed included:

- Safety concerns regarding truck traffic and existing intersections.
- Potential impacts of a new 4-lane highway to farming operations including severances of farm lands and access across a 4-lane freeway.
- Many local residents expressed a desire to see the new highway built as soon as possible.
- Questions regarding whether the improvements would be built as a freeway or expressway.



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## Expressway West of Monmouth Planned

The Study Team has been studying whether a freeway, with fully-controlled access, or an expressway, with partially controlled access, would be most appropriate for the proposed improvements to U.S. Route 34. Based on engineering studies with considerations to public comments, the Study Team will proceed with engineering and environmental studies for an expressway west of Monmouth. Reasons for this decision include:

- Up to 90% of existing traffic will utilize an expressway;
- An expressway will reduce adverse travel because it allows more direct

- access to the roadway:
- More direct access from local crossroads and private residences will be available with an expressway;
  - Less impact to natural resources and farmland due to lower amount of right-of-way required;
  - An expressway will better serve the local community and west central Illinois while accommodating through-traffic; and
  - An expressway will be less costly.

## Origin and Destination Studies Completed

Studies for the U.S. Route 34 project area were conducted to assess